Iz Literatur T-9 (1928-9; 1934-5) 1928 AVT Burusho AVT

THE BURUSHO OF HUNZA

sufficiently severe. Happily winter is short, two or three months at most, and for the rest of the year day and night are spent mainly out of doors.

The social culture of the Burusho of Hunza is as high as their material culture is primitive. Three centuries of Islam—they are now Ismaili heretics, having been Shiahs until three or four generations ago—have not induced them to veil or despise their indomitable women, nor to abandon the wholesome tradition of exogamy between their different clans in favour of first-cousin marriage. They are freer from superstition and fanaticism than any people east or west of whom I have heard or read. Whatever be the esoteric teaching of the Ismailis of which Professor Ivanov might tell, it concerns the Hunza peasant as little as the homoousian controversy disturbs the mind of the British schoolboy. He goes his way in cheerful confidence that hard work, fair dealing, kindly affection and generosity must be as well pleasing to God the Merciful, the Compassionate, as ritual prayer or ceremonial fast, and his dreams are not broken by over-anxious fear of Hell or hope of Heaven.

The fastidiousness and personal cleanliness of the Hunza peasant are remarkable. Close packed amongst the crowd at festivals or sitting on the threshing floor amongst the workers, or entertained in their hospitable houses, we were never distressed by human exhalations or molested by parasites. The drinking water is guarded with scrupulous care from pollution by man or beast. Men and women cooperate without embarrassment or restraint and no work is taboo for either sex, though for obvious reasons the heavier jobs of wall-building, irrigation and ploughing fall more naturally to the man, and the care of infants to the woman. But as soon as the father is allowed to handle his child, he will carry the baby proudly and tenderly out for its first airings, while boys and girls alike play with and watch over the toddlers.

Again and again, in face of the high morality and unquenchable spirit of the Hunzukuts, we were ashamed to think of what in our vaunted civilization 'man has made of man'.

854

PLATE VIII

1. Grandfather mending Baby Dapir. (See p. 181)

1. Baby worship. Nupir mending in field. (See p. 119)

573

Facing P. 96

LAND AND HOUSES IN HUNZA

463 ment departments, act as postal runners or dispensary assistants, do part-time jobs as "levies," or enter the private employment of British officers. Travel where you will in the Agency, some enterprising Hunza man is there before you, as carpenter or washerman, as touring merchant or in Government employ. You may even meet an old Hunza taxi-driver in Bombay or a Hunza *chaprasi* in Lahore.

177 At first the Mir rather discouraged these farther-afield
167 adventures, and not unwisely. New ideas, new customs, new dress, imported from abroad might well upset the happy balance of the home civilization; but the increasing pressure of population—a dubious benefit the *Pax Britannica* is wont to bring—makes some outlet necessary for ambitious youth, and some supplement necessary for home support, and the Mir's policy has been modified accordingly. With rare exceptions the travellers' hearts remain in their Hunza highlands; they go for a few years and return with newly acquired skill, with a set of carpenter's tools it may be, with a smoothing-iron or a sewing machine, to resume work on the family farm and earn a little "on the side."

583 We heard that a new house was being built by a certain
342 Kalbi (not the Levy; one of another clan) and were invited to go down—some hundreds of feet—and see it in its half-finished state. "It must cost a lot to build a new house," we said. "How did you come to have money enough to spare?" "Well, you see, I have two sons away working—thank God." And, in fact, except in the few cases where the Hunza man goes over-far afield to Bombay or the Panjab, and needs his own earnings to support a down-country family, the Hunza son remits home every spare anna, knowing well that it will be spent on the home he himself will presently enjoy and share. When he comes back on leave he brings his mother an aluminium cooking-pot or basin to jostle the stone *kalosh* and wooden bowl, or an iron bucket which incongruously companions the local gourd when his sisters go to draw the drinking water.

342 In theory there are any number of sizes and patterns of house which you can build in Hunza: the cow-pattern, the ant-pattern, and half a dozen more, but in actual fact there are

SEPTEMBER HARVEST

When the threshing floor is heaped with ears, some people turn cows on to trample them; some people prefer to beat the heap with sticks. It depends, I expect, how many cows you have without borrowing, or how many stout arms to wield the flail. It is rather fun to see a family beating, even the children hammering away with tiny poles. The Hunzukuts are kind to their kiddies and fond of them, but have happily no time to spoil them, and as the children have always something new and interesting to do they are very rarely troublesome. If they are, some grown-up will give them a mild smack on the head (the little cap prevents its hurting much) and all is well again. If a child is sick they carry it out with them to the fields (no one can be spared to stay at home to mind it) and chuck a cloth over it to keep the flies off, and let it lie there in peace till it feels better. The youngsters work just as long as they feel interested, then fade away and play for a bit, and join another group and work a while again. There seems to be no attempt to force them or even overtly to encourage them. Their own instinct is to copy the grown-ups or next-older brother. Yet the sense of responsibility wakes early; a five- or six-year-old is often in charge of the two-year-old toddler, rejoices in steadying him as he tries to walk or in mounting him on the shoulders to cross a water-channel or climb a wall. We used sometimes to feel a little anxious about the baby's fate, but its mother never did. I have never heard a Hunza mother shout "Don't do that, darling," or "Take care, you'll drop the baby," or "Don't go so near the edge, you'll fall." Hunza consists of "edges"—the house-roof, the field, the reservoir, the cliff—and no doubt Nature in the course of centuries has weeded out the stocks that lose their balance. Our occasional solicitude was the cause of much merriment; we could not always suppress a "Take care, you'll slip," and this became a standing joke amongst our smaller friends. If all other conversation failed a jesting cry from someone of "Take care, Mother, you'll fall" would set the ball rolling again. Jolly little scamps they are, and pleasant companions for a walk. I counted seven in front and three behind me one day, all between five and seven, with two or three babies mounted on the others'

524 apexes (apices? no, no!) are the "squares" and any man can move and take in any direction. It requires quite as much skill and provides quite as much fun as draughts played in our way. There are half a dozen other games of the sort, roughly variants of "marbles," all played with pebbles and governed by complicated rules which we only partially mastered.

957 We used to watch Nimo, of No. 7, a jolly, bright-eyed mite of eight or nine, pass our window every morning about half-past six, sturdily carrying an empty shoulder basket as she herded her two or three small cows off to the *toq*; sometimes she was taking charge of a small brother or sister as well. Just before nightfall, after a whole summer day on the mountain side, she would return, driving her animals and stooping 237 slightly under her load. One evening in the very early days I 857 stopped her to ask *whose* Nimo she was (their names duplicate 241 each other like our Joans, Anns, and Dorises), and "What have you got in your basket there?" With courteous surprise at being asked a question to which there could be only one answer: "Why, to-day's cow-dung." Sure enough I soon discovered that every little cowherd conscientiously gathers every scrap of the cow's daily output and brings it home to the manure store in the barn—there are no untidy outdoor middens to spoil the landscape or defile the air.

Another day we met Khano of No. 3, one of our first boy-friends, breathlessly chivvying a cow uphill to a spot where he had safely dumped his baby sister Gulâb, in charge of his basket. "Hullo, did she run away from you?" "She did, the villain, but I've got her back, and look, Mother, I've lost nothing," he said, as he proudly displayed the contents of his looped-up cloak. He threw his treasure into the basket and resumed his attentions to Gulâb, while the cow resigned herself to orthodox grazing. He was playing with the little girl, patiently coaxing her to totter a step or two and flop into his waiting arms, and throwing up little stones for her to catch.

857 The tenderness of the bigger children to the babies is a ● [593] beautiful thing to watch. I never saw boy or girl out of temper with a baby brother, sister, or cousin, or resentful of having one in charge. When the bigger ones are busy in some momen-

2: Lorimer T-3 (1932–4; 1934–5) 1939 AV7 Burusho AV7

600 floor of No. 7 and found a large group of neighbours flailing buckwheat. They made me welcome, and I tried some photographs. "It was very kind of you to send Nimo for me," said I. "But we never sent for you." Then I repeated what the children had said, and we all laughed heartily—the young monkeys had fetched me out on their own account! A few moments later riders were seen approaching. I sped down to welcome them.

Nice folk they proved. The Swedes used to reach Kashgar through Russia in twenty-four days, but Russian travel being uncertain they had been forced to make the long detour via India and our Gilgit road—a matter of at least three months.

● 593 Some weeks after my last call on Bibi Gimo I was passing by her home again and was hailed by the children from the roof: "Do come in and see the baby!" I was always chary of too readily accepting such impulsive invitations. "Run down and ask mother if she would like to see me." In a moment Najat came out bearing an authorized welcome. It proved that I had come at a fortunate time, for Baby Faqér had just been lifted for a meal and was kicking and crowing in his mother's arms with wonderful vigour for so small an infant. She took
593 off the kerchief that bound his head—it was a large linen hand-
854 kerchief I had purloined from David's store for him, and I
751 gathered that its size and quality were prized—and ran her
291 hand lovingly through his fine crop of dark hair, keeping a watchful eye for possible inhabitants which she gladly failed to find. I was laughed at for admiring his head of hair so much. The kerchief had a funny little needlebook affair attached by brightcoloured threads which had a verse from the Qur'an stitched into it to serve as amulet. Most small children's caps are decorated with several of these gaily coloured, dangling charms, but I should guess that they are merely "the thing," and are not taken more seriously than a charm on a girl's bracelet at home or the mascot on her father's car. Grown-ups rarely display them, but Dádo used to sport a string of them underneath his waistcoat when we travelled.

593 I sat down for a chat while the ceremony proceeded, and I observed that baby-worship is as thorough in Hunza as amongst

2: Lorimer T-3 (1920-4; 1934-5) 1939 AV7 Burusho AV7

ourselves. Naját and Shukuru and all the children were gathered round, but the men were out at work and the house was (relatively) empty. So while the mother fed the child I learned all I could about orthodox baby management. Until the baby cuts his first tooth his mother will not take him to any house where there is another infant. Possibly it is felt that with one tooth he will be armed for self-defence against his contemporary; possibly the rival mothers might be tempted into tactless comparisons. Up till this point, too, no male of the house may handle him. An amusing little ceremony heralds the cutting of this all-important tooth. Some elderly man—usually the grandfather—"well skilled with children," takes the baby in his arms and out into the open. After that his father and brothers are free to play with him and carry him about.

Until the child is two or thereabouts he lives the life of a recluse, strapped into his cradle night and day except at meal-times, or when taken out for an airing in grown-up arms.

When the moment came for replacing Faqér in his cradle, Naját and Shukuru bestirred themselves and fetched some dry, finely powdered earth which they gently warmed over the ashes of the fire. Bibo Gimo produced a large square of strong cloth, sweet and clean but dark with use, and spread it on the dais, lying the baby down on it with a tiny cushion under his head. Then plenty of the earth—it proved to be pounded sun-dried cow-dung, as clean and inoffensive to handle as the fibre in which we plant our bulbs—was packed round him above and below, and he was carefully parcelled up, arms, legs, and feet, into the stout cloth, bandaged into it with a long binder, and laid in the cradle. When he is "changed" the last lot of packing is thrown on to the fields for their enrichment—and that's that. Very cleanly and ingenious it all is and vastly preferable to the eternal washing of "nappies," which, indeed, would be a grim task with insufficiency of cloths, cold water, and no soap.

The bottom of the cradle was full of nice clean straw with a padded mattress on top, and by the time baby's cushion was adjusted and a red quilt laid up to his chin and well tucked in

854 round him, he looked extremely comfortable and well-protected. Next, a piece of wide cloth was threaded by its hem on a rod fastened along the side of the cradle, and passed several times over his tummy and under the wooden cot, being finally lashed to the ridge pole. If the cradle had then been knocked over or rolled down hill baby could neither fall out nor get bumped. Finally a thick blanket was thrown over like a tent, and he was safe from dust or smoke or flies—or fresh air. Mother gave a few gentle rocks and he settled into sleep.

854 The use of the cradle in Hunza is said to be relatively recent,
352 and the pattern of it, wherever it was introduced from, includes the prescription that it shall be made from a special sort of hard wood that grows wild on certain mountain spots and is supposed to possess magical properties. The ridge-pole forms a convenient carrying handle, and wherever you see a group of women working and chatting together, spinning in the shade or on the roof, beating out new-washed wool on a sandy patch beside a stream, pounding kernels, washing clothes, or busy on the threshing floor, you will usually see a cradle or two beside them. Truby King might disapprove of so much infant seclusion; but the flat roof offers a drop of 12 or 14 feet on to boulders, and even the living-room a gentle roll into the open
855 hearth, so that Hunza is no place for crawlers. By the time
593 baby is ripe for toddling, he is old enough to be entrusted to
857 the next-older children, who take him pick-a-back or on their shoulders, scaling walls and leaping streams with him as sure-footed as young goats, and as fearless. They carry him to some flat spot and guard him with the most scrupulous care and proudly watch over his first steps.

163 Babies in Hunza are spaced at intervals of three and four
866 years, so no mother is worn out with child-bearing or embarrassed in her daily work by ex-babies clinging to her skirts and jealous of the infant in her arms. Banu, for instance, was four, sturdy and ripe for independence, before Faqér came to claim the family's attention. Soon after his arrival we used to see her stalking about, proudly taking her first walks alone, and obviously savouring the new freedom from older supervision. One day she had passed twice or three times up and

7:Tobe C,T-3 (1959)1960 AV7 Burusho AV7
Hunza

In discussing the Hunzan game of polo with some friends, when they heard me mention the fact that the best and largest piece of flat land was used for a polo field, they said, "Now, John, this is very contradictory. You claim they are intelligent people and every bit of arable land is needed and used for cultivation and now you tell me that the best piece of land and the largest level space is used for a polo field!"

My reply was, "What I've told you is absolutely true, but sometimes there are considerations involved which neither you nor I nor others in the Western world understand. For example, could we ever explain to the people of Hunza why we rush, swish, hurry and risk our necks driving down the highways, actually risking life and limb—not only our own, but countless others—only to get to our destination . . . and there do nothing!

"Or there is another example that may be even better. A man in America strives all his life to achieve the means of acquiring a home with all modern conveniences and comforts, including every electrically operated appliance or gadget devised to save time and effort. Then when this victory is achieved, he tries to get enough money to buy a summer cottage way up north. There he parks his family for the summer. Then over every weekend he drives hundreds of miles to get there and when he gets there what has he got? Outdoor plumbing, no hot water, no garbage disposal, no electricity—using a lamp or even a candle for light and carrying every bucket of water in from the lake or the creek. You just try to explain that to a Hunzan. There is no more rhyme and reason in one than there is in the other. But who am I to judge?"

It is a positive fact that the men in Hunza do beat their wives. I checked and double checked on this rather important question. The Mir told me he knew

7:Tobe C,T-3 (1959)1960 AV7 Burusho AV7
Hunza

593 of only one case where a man excessively and unjustly
613 administered thrashings on his spouse. In all other instances the men are not punished or sent to prison for it. If a wife doesn't do as her husband commands, he beats her. If she were too generous in giving away her husband's property to her parents, he would also beat
837 her. If she is unfaithful to him and he catches her, he has a right to kill both her and her seducer.

This seems to have an excellent effect in maintaining a high standard of loyalty. I am not sure as to how the people of the West will regard the people of Hunza for the light I have shed here, but whatever your judgment and opinion, I have laid the facts before you.

7:Tobe C,T-3 (1959)1960 AV7 Burusho AV7
Hunza

him, she would at least know beforehand what she had to contend with. Then again, as the Mir performs all marriages, maybe he wouldn't allow this young man to take a second wife. I did not inquire any further into the details concerning this case, but I admit that I was somewhat surprised to think that a good healthy happy Hunzan would resort to one of civilization's favorite pastimes . . . wife-beating.

Wife-beating generally seems to be broadly practiced in Hunza. This struck me as being most strange for I could see little cause or likelihood of opportunities for misdemeanors on the part of the wife.

Upon taking the matter up with the Mir, he told me that most cases of wife-beating were brought about by nagging, and in Hunza that is sufficient justifiable cause for a man to administer a sound thrashing to his wife and she can't take him to the Mir's court about it, either. The next most frequent cause for wife-beating is over-generosity to her parents with her husband's possessions.

Wife-beating under such provocations as stated might meet with universal support and approval on the part of mankind. There may be principles and practices in Hunza that will not find widespread support in the West, but I'll bet on the basis of the two causes for wife-beating there will be broad, if not general, male approval.

By Hunza law a daughter cannot inherit property. The best that she can get in a property settlement is the use of the property for her lifetime. It then must revert to a male member of the father's family. There have been instances where a daughter has been willed an individual tree—in most cases, an apricot tree. This remains her property, or at least the crops do, for as long as the tree or she lives.

7:Tobe C,T-3 (1959)1960 AV7 Burusho AV7
Hunza

their own land. They spin their own wool. Then they weave it into cloth from which they cut and sew their clothes. However he can also buy or trade for woolen cloth or he can have his own wool woven for him.

They have little or no money. The few dollars that he might get during the year would come from the expeditions that congregate in the area and hire the Hunzans as porters. And they are unsurpassed at this difficult and arduous work.

A man has a right to inflict corporal punishment upon his wife if she nags him. Perhaps that is why the men of Hunza have that cheerful look.

The children are never neglected because the parents are always at home. Further, the children do their share of the work in the fields and are taught to do so from early childhood. This also eliminates juvenile delinquency.

The people of Hunza have splendid dispositions. They are genial, pleasant, smiling and cheerful. They have deep respect for authority, profound love of the land, affection, compassion and understanding for their neighbors and they are most hospitable to strangers. They hold their heads high, their chests out and they are strong, honest and hard-working. To me this showed clearly and positively that people can live and that agriculture can exist and thrive without chemistry, chemical fertilizers, chemical sprays or synthetic medicines and drugs.

They enjoy happiness without modernization, long life without doctors, nurses and hospitals, democracy without bureaucracy, law and order without police and self-sufficiency without money. Part of the answer, if not most of it, is their loyalty to and their faith in their land, a pure case of unremitting agriculture and putting everything back into the soil which was taken

[P44-A]

Marriages are not arranged against the will of either party, and although divorce is legally very easy for men or women, it is not common. Women are neither abused nor overworked, and the mother is the reported chief of the house, as the father is of the farm. Marriage does not encompass companionship as we know it; men spend their spare time in the company of other men, and women visit exclusively with other women. They hold their dances on separate threshing floors a half-mile or so apart, on the same night, and one hetzle the eager teen-age boy who dresses in his sister's clothes and sneaks into a girls' dance.

At the time of the Tamashalong, and only then, Hunza families butcher a sheep or two; cold weather preserves the meat for the few days before it is all eaten—and it is virtually all eaten. Even the long bones are cracked to extract the last marrow. After this taste of meat, the winter of the dietary year sets in. Gradually the supply of carrots and potatoes fails, then the wheat, the barley, the dried apricots, and the tea. By springtime the poorer folk may eat only once in two days. No one starves to death, but no one has enough to stop hunger.

The regular Hunza diet has no fats, no animal proteins, no vitamin A, no vitamin D, a deficiency of vitamin B, and a serious deficiency of calcium. Apricots contain some sugar and vitamin C, but the poorer families are unable to raise large crops. (The size of apricot orchards determines a man's wealth and status.) Hunzas use every bit of the apricot, as they do of the sheep. They cut the pits from the fruits, crack them, and remove the almond-like nuts. The women hand-grind these with stone mortars, then squeeze the meal between a hand-stone and a flat rock to express the oil. Apricot oil is fuel for the saucer-shaped lamps that illuminate their houses, as lamps of this type have done since the Bronze Age. The oil is very bitter, naturally enough, because of its high contents of prussic acid, fifty drops of which are said to be lethal in about three hours. Men add a few drops, as bitters, to their wine, and occasionally a despondent woman takes a dose in order to commit suicide.

Mild cases of rickets and scurvy are rampant every spring—not enough to kill, just enough to loosen teeth, cause aching knees, and deform ribs